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PROMISING PRINCIPALS ACADEMY LAUNCHES NEW CLASS FOR 2015-16

A new generation of Maryland school leaders converged on Annapolis this week for Maryland's second Promising Principals Academy.

The Academy, a unique effort by the Maryland State Department of Education to prepare a new cadre of principals, is building on the success of its first year. Research has repeatedly shown that an effective principal is the key to a successful school.



The inaugural class of the Promising Principals Academy is already at work helping to lead Maryland public schools.

More than a dozen educators included in the Promising Principals Academy's initial cohort have already been promoted.

"Maryland public school success is built on the foundation of strong school leadership," said Maryland State Superintendent Lillian M. Lowery. "This outstanding program provides training and year-round mentoring to support these women and men who are entering leadership roles. Our students are the beneficiaries."

Two participants from 23 of Maryland's 24 local school systems -- plus one participant from Kent County and another from the statewide SEED School -- are involved in this year's class. Participants were nominated by their local superintendents based on their leadership potential, interest, and current position. This summer conference—aligned to principal evaluation standards—marks the first time this cohort of promising principals has gathered as a whole. The group will hold four more convenings throughout the year, as well as online/digital coaching sessions.

For more on this year's class, go [here](#).

GUFFRIE SMITH ELECTED STATE BOARD PRESIDENT

The Maryland State Board of Education this week unanimously elected long-time educator Guffrie M. Smith, Jr. as president, and University of Maryland Professor S. James Gates as vice president.



New State Board Vice President Dr. S. James Gates, former State Board President James DeGraffenreidt, and new President Guffrie M. Smith, during this week's State Board meeting.

Guffrie M. Smith, Jr. is a retired educator with a diverse career including more than 30 years with Calvert County Public Schools (1964-1975 and 1981-2004) and more than six years with the Maryland State Department of Education (1975-1981). In Calvert County, he served as a teacher, vice principal, principal, supervisor, coordinator of Healthy Families, director of curriculum/instruction and coordinator of a resource center. With the State, he served as specialist in migrant education, specialist in Title I and Migrant Branch Chief. Mr. Smith also has a long history of volunteer service in Calvert County.

A graduate of St. Mary's County Public Schools, Mr. Smith earned his B.S. and M.A. degrees from Bowie State University. He has participated in post graduate studies at the University of Maryland and Nova University. He is married, has two daughters, and resides in Calvert County.

Dr. Sylvester James "Jim" Gates, Jr., a theoretical physicist, received two B.S. degrees and a Ph.D. degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His doctoral thesis was the first thesis at MIT to deal with supersymmetry. He also completed postgraduate studies at both Harvard University and the California Institute of Technology (CalTech). Gates is currently a University System Regents Professor, the John S. Toll Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland, College Park, the Center for String and Particle Theory Director, and serves on the U.S. President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). He is known for his work on mathematical physics.

In 2013, President Obama awarded Dr. Gates the National Medal of Science, the highest recognition given by the U.S. to scientists. That year, he also was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, becoming the first African-American physicist so recognized in its 150-year history. Dr. Gates is married to Dr. Dianna Abney, the Charles County Health Officer. They have a daughter and a son and reside in Prince George's County.

Mr. Smith succeeds Dr. Charlene Dukes as president, while Dr. Gates succeeds Dr. Mary Kay Finan as vice president. The board terms of both Dr. Dukes and Dr. Finan had expired.

A few words from State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery



State Superintendent of Schools
Lillian M. Lowery

Summer learning for students takes many forms -- from our venerable Maryland Summer Centers for Gifted and Talented students to many unique local programs. This summer brought an exciting addition to summer learning that involved parents in the equation: Family Coding Clubs.

Students and parents together became computer scientists at these clubs, joining to create their own inventions using the latest computer technology. For example, teams may develop games and controllers, using such programs as Scratch and MaKey Makey. Based on a successful program developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Clubs took place on Saturdays at libraries in five Maryland counties.

Maryland's Family Coding Clubs were a pilot project this summer, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. MSDE's Division of Library Development and Services partnered with Code in the Schools and FutureMakers to launch the program. The final sessions are set for tomorrow in St. Mary's and Washington counties, but we hope the program can return and expand next summer.

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Elizabeth Leight

Congratulations to the Maryland PTA, which just held its 100th Annual Convention. The PTA has been a critical partner in our efforts to strengthen public education throughout the State, and the energy from that meeting always leaves me confident of the future.

We look forward to working with incoming Maryland PTA President Elizabeth Ysla Leight, who took over the reins of the organization with this month's convention. But I would be remiss if I didn't give a hearty thank you to outgoing President Ray Leone. Ray has worked tirelessly to increase parent involvement in public education -- not just during his two-year term but ever since his children entered elementary school. People like Ray and Elizabeth help keep Maryland education at the national forefront.

Calendar

August 12-15 - Maryland Association of Counties, Ocean City

August 19 - First school systems open class for 2015-16 (St. Mary's and Washington Counties)

August 25 - Maryland State Board of Education meeting, Baltimore

In the News

[State Officials Say New Assessments Saved \\$2.5 Million](#)

Baltimore Sun

[Coding Club Helps Families Bond Over Technology](#)

Hagerstown Herald-Mail

[Maryland Gains Three Year ESEA Flexibility Renewal](#)

Baltimore Sun

[Editorial: Free College? The Promise of the Say Yes Campaign](#)

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